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TAGS: PREL PARM MNUC IR AG IZ

SUBJECT: ALGERIAN PRESIDENT AND PRIME MINISTER SHARE VIEWS
ON IRAN WITH SENATOR NELSON

Classified By: DCM Thomas F. Daughton; reasons 1.4 (b, d)

¶1. (C) In separate meetings with Senator Bill Nelson (D-FL) on June 3, Prime Minister Belkhadem and President Bouteflika made remarks on Iran, primarily in the context of Iranian Foreign Minister Mottaki's June 2 visit to Algiers.

Belkhadem observed with respect to Iranian involvement in Iraq that Arab and Persian societies had been in conflict for centuries. He indicated that senior Algerian officials had told Mottaki that all parties must work together to respect Iraq's unity, sovereignty and stability. On Iran's current thinking on the nuclear question, Belkhadem said the Iranian FM had merely stated that negotiations with the Europeans were continuing. In Algeria's view, Belkhadem reported, progress had been made on the Iranian nuclear issue, but more progress was still needed.

¶2. (C) Belkhadem said Mottaki's Algerian interlocutors had stressed the GOA's preference for state spending on developing people rather than weapons. The prime minister underscored Algerian support for the use of nuclear power for peaceful and civilian purposes under the supervision of international regulatory agencies and said Mottaki heard this message in Algiers. Belkhadem observed that the U.S., Russia, France and other countries, including Pakistan and India, possessed the nuclear bomb. In the case of India, Belkhadem noted that impoverishment there was great and the money spent developing nuclear weapons could have been better spent on education for the Indian people. It was important, Belkhadem said, to invest in the reduction of poverty, illness and ignorance rather than financing weapons of war.

¶3. (C) Later the same day, President Bouteflika told the Ambassador and Senator Nelson that Mottaki had pointed to recent discussions in Baghdad and said that Iran welcomed a resumption of direct contacts with the U.S. According to Bouteflika, Mottaki underlined that Iran wanted to sustain the dialogue with the U.S. He added that the Iranian foreign minister had said that Iran was not seeking to aggravate tensions between Sunnis and Shia in Iraq. Bouteflika then said that to be polite he was obliged to take the Iranian's word in good faith. Bouteflika noted, however, that the principle of acceptable dissimulation (*takiya*) was firmly established in the Shia school of thought, and he warned that one should be careful of what the Iranians are actually doing.

¶4. (U) Senator Nelson did not have the opportunity to clear this message.

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